

Testimony to the House Judiciary Committee Regarding HB 136 in the 34th Legislature

When HB136's sponsor presented this bill to the House Transportation Committee April 1, 2025, he spoke repeatedly about its effect on a south Anchorage airstrip.

What Rep. Kopp *didn't address* was HB136's potential effect on the Fish Creek Trail Connection project.

If HB136 becomes law, it could kill the connection project, which is fully funded, fully permitted and broadly, strongly, repeatedly supported by many citizens.

Its principal opponents, J.L. McCarrey III and John E. Haxby have hired Rep. Kopp's company, Winfluence Strategies, to oppose the connection project. Rep. Kopp's Winfluence partner is Cherie Curry.

On December 10, 2024, the Anchorage Daily News reported <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/anchorage/2024/12/10/state-puts-anchorage-fish-creek-trail-extension-on-hold-after-marathon-petroleum-objects-to-route/> that Winfluence represented McCarrey and Haxby.

In the ADN article, "Curry said Winfluence had worked with clients opposing the project to get staff members from the governor's office and DOT Commissioner Ryan Anderson out for a tour of the properties to see what would happen to backyards such as Haxby's. Winfluence has represented McCarrey in correspondence with the municipal attorney over the land rights dispute."

Also on December 10, 2024, the Alaska Landmine reported <https://alaskalandmine.com/landmines/unexplained-halt-of-fish-creek-trail-connection-project-prompts-confusion-outrage/> that "...Haxby engaged Winfluence Strategies and Consulting, whose two-person team includes Representative-elect Chuck Kopp. Haxby and Kopp separately told the Landmine that they had contacted and engaged with members of Governor Mike Dunleavy's (R – Alaska) Office regarding the trail.

The Landmine article continued: "Political donation records show that Haxby has also made a number of large donations to government officials in recent years. These include \$500 donations to both Senator Matt Claman (D – Anchorage) and Chuck Kopp in 2024..." The photograph in this article of Mr. Haxby at the 12/5/24 AMATS meeting shows Ms. Curry sitting behind Mr. Haxby.

On May 2, 2024, a Turnagain Community Council officer indicated

<https://www.communitycouncils.org/download/24004.pdf> that

“• Cathy was contacted by Chuck Kopp who is representing neighbors [to the Fish Creek trail connection project]:...

• Another Land Use Committee meeting to hear from Chuck Kopp regarding legal issues.”

On May 10, 2024, the Old Seward/Oceanview Community Council heard <https://www.communitycouncils.org/download/24097.pdf> that Mr. Kopp was representing opponents of the connection project:

“7. Old Business

a. Alaska Railroad Trail on the Easement – John Pletcher along with Chuck Kopp and Cherie Curry of WINfluence provided a DRAFT Resolution Opposing Public Recreation Trails in Alaska Railroad Right-of-Way (ROW), see the map of BLM’s Alaska Long Trail, Fish Creek Trail, Railroaded Alaska

• Cherie Curry, from WINfluence, introduced a draft Resolution Opposing Public Recreation Trails in Alaska Railroad Right-of-Way (ROW). WINfluence is working with communities from Seward to Fairbanks, Whittier and with people all along the tracks.”

After all Winfluence’s work for Haxby and McCarrey, Rep. Kopp testified to the House Transportation Committee April 1, 2025 (@ 56:50 into the recording), “I don’t have any clients that have, that are, that are involved with this legislation, House Bill 136. Those were all resigned before I took office.”

Really? When, exactly, were Haxby and McCarrey “resigned” as Winfluence clients? How was such resignation documented? Are we to believe that Rep. Kopp and Ms. Curry no longer care about the connection project, no longer care about Mr. McCarrey’s and Mr. Haxby’s interests? Or does Rep. Kopp have a conflict of interest?

Regardless of whether Haxby and McCarrey were “resigned” as Winfluence clients before Rep. Kopp was sworn in, Winfluence maintains an interest in killing the Fish Creek Trail connection project, as evidenced by Ms. Curry’s attendance at the ADOT/PF-AMATS Fish Creek Trail Connection Project Open House #2, March 19, 2025, where she and I spoke to one another.

At the very least, Rep. Kopp has the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The connection project’s public benefits far outweigh McCarrey’s or Haxby’s personal, private interests.

The connector will promote public safety for non-automotive users, i.e. children, cyclists, skaters, runners, walkers and handicapped citizens, whereas enactment of HB136 leaves those same users at risk of clashes with automobiles.

The trail connector, facilitating physical exercise, will also promote public health, whereas enactment of HB136 would not.

Personal, private use should not trump public use and public benefit.

Please support public use, public benefit, public safety and public health, and please do not support conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof. Please amend Version T, page 2, line 11 to delete the word “unreasonably,” and insert after “corporation’s” the words “or it’s permittees’.”

Or vote against passing HB136 out of the House Judiciary Committee.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Tom Atkinson
Anchorage